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Opening extract from

Peacemaker

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Published by

Barrington Stoke

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PEACE
MAKER

PEACE MAKER

Malorie BLACKMAN

With illustrations by Matthew Griffin

Barrington Stoke

www.malorieblackman.co.uk

For Neil and Lizzy
With love, as always

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CHAPTER 1
STORY

"Michela Corbin, what did I just say?"

The class began to snigger. I looked up in dismay. There, right in front of my desk, was Teacher Faber. I stared up at her and blinked with confusion. I hadn't even seen her coming! I tried to cover my screen with my hand, but the teacher was too fast for me. She snatched up my screen and started to read the story I'd been writing. I groaned. I was in deep, *deep* trouble. Again!

"Michela Corbin, you are supposed to be writing an essay on section 4.15 of the Peace

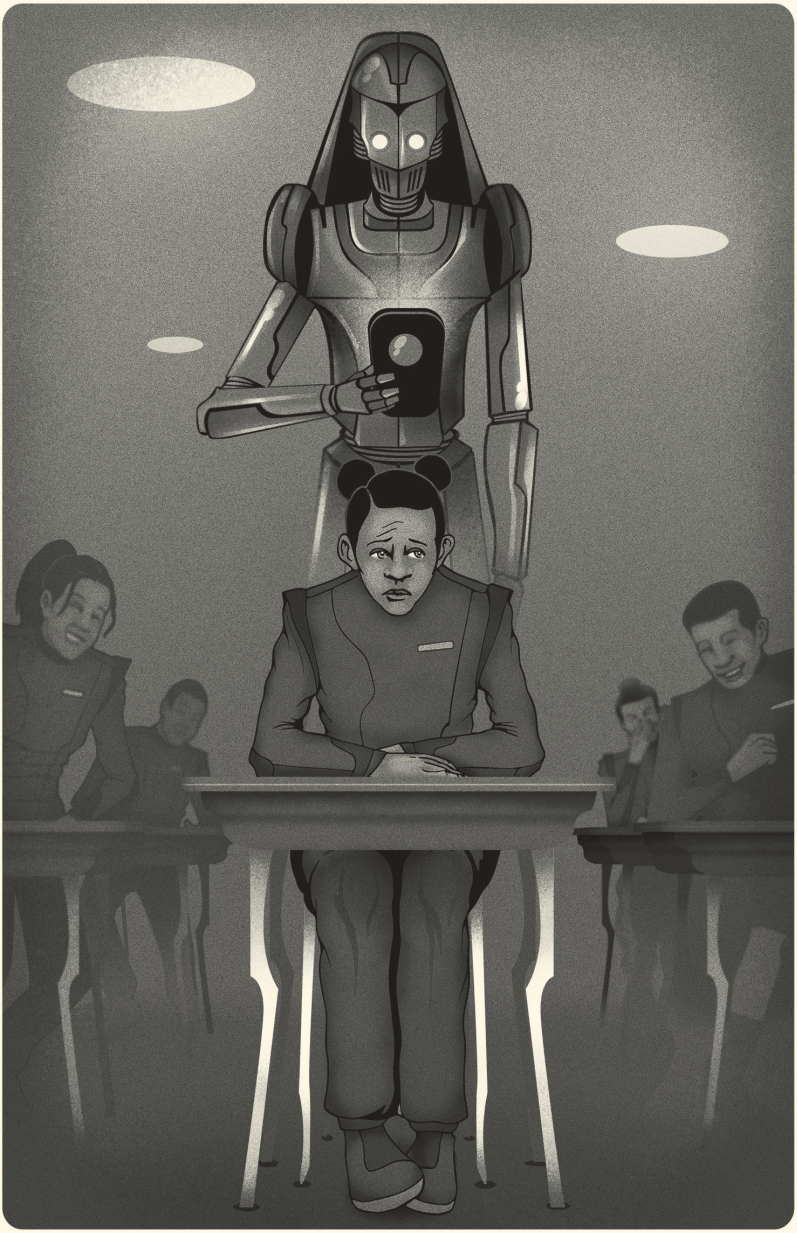
Treaty between the Alliance and the Others. Not this … this … *this*!" Teacher Faber waved my screen under my nose.

"I'm sorry. I'll delete it." I grabbed for my screen. Teacher Faber snatched it back.

"Let us take a look at what has kept you so busy," the teacher said. Her tone was dripping with sarcasm. "Are you ready for this, class?" she asked.

"I spun around, fast as a spitting cobra. Davin lunged at me with her laz-sword. I swung my weapon down to parry her thrust. The sound of laser beam on laser beam was a musical zing. With a roar of fury, Davin whipped her laz-sword up towards my head. I ducked and stepped back. I didn't want to hurt her, but one touch from the laz-sword would be lethal – and I wasn't prepared to die. I …"

Teacher Faber stopped reading, but not before my face was on fire. Half the class were



in fits of laughter. The other half were glaring at me.

"This tish-tosh is not just nonsense, it's dangerous nonsense," Teacher Faber said. "I told you the last time that you'd had your final warning. Now you'll go on report. Again."

"Oh please, you can't," I begged. "My mother will go nuts! I'll do the essay. I'll stay behind and work late. I'll ..."

Teacher Faber broke in. "Not another word," she said. "You're on report and that's final. And I shall make sure that your mother sees this ... this story of yours."

My blood ran icy cold. "You can't do that ..." I whispered.

"Watch me," Teacher Faber said. "I don't know what's wrong with you, Michela. You persist with writing these absurd stories ..."

"They're adventures," I protested. "They're just made up ..."

"You humans are supposed to abhor violence of any kind – even in stories," Teacher Faber said. "And yet, Michela, you insist on reading forbidden books like *Treasure Island* and *The Hunger Games*. And then you write this kind of fantastical, dangerous foolishness."

It wasn't my fault I read forbidden books. If they weren't forbidden in the first place, then I wouldn't get into trouble for reading them! My mother owned an impressive collection of books from the past 200 years. Most of them were fiction and most of them were now forbidden.

My mother kept the books locked up in glass cases in a room she called the Library, and it had taken me ages to get at them without her knowing. She called them "a good investment" – whatever that meant. I called them a good read. I didn't see the point in

owning books if you didn't read them. The trouble was, Mother didn't see it like that. She'd caught me with my nose in one of her books more than once. The last time, Mother threatened to burn them all if she caught me with just one of them again. So instead of reading, I'd taken to writing my own stories – but that seemed to get me into even worse trouble.

"I won't read or write stories any more," I pleaded. "Please don't report me."

Teacher Faber keyed in some commands on the console. Her fingers moved so fast that they were a blur.

"It is done," Teacher Faber said as she moved away. "I have sent a full report to Commander Newton and to your mother."

I scowled at her. Rotten, snake-brained weasel robot! Then I groaned. What was my mother going to say?